



**Bureau of Buildings  
Residential Conversions**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

**1. What is the purpose of a building code?**

Building codes are regulatory requirements designed to provide for the construction of safe and habitable buildings.

**2. Can a building permit be issued prior to the formal issuance of zoning variance?**

No.

**3. When is a building permit required?**

By City Ordinance, a building permit is required “to construct, erect, demolish, install, alter or repair...any building, structure, equipment, appliances or system...”

**4. When is a building permit not required?**

A building permit is not required for repair work with a total valuation of less than \$2,500; provided such work is otherwise lawful. Repair work means in-kind repairs which do not add to, alter, or otherwise modify the building or structure.

**5. What is the time limit for a valid permit?**

A building permit becomes valid when it has been stamped “Paid” by the Municipal Revenue Collector. Once a building permit has been issued (*with exception of the demolition of certain buildings*), it remains valid unless work is not started within six (6) months or; once started, is abandoned or discontinued for a period of six (6) months.

**6. When are a licensed architect and/or engineer required in the permit process?**

A licensed architect or engineer is required for:

- Any new building exceeding one story, or over 5000 square feet,
- Any building costing \$50,000 or more, (*with exception of one and two family structures*)
- All new or existing assembly,
- Educational, health care, correctional, or detention facilities,
- Hotels,
- Dormitories or lodging facilities,
- Multi-family housing or apartment complexes, and
- Care facilities.

## **7. What is a Certificate of Occupancy/Temporary Certificate of Occupancy?**

A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is a written confirmation issued by the Bureau of Buildings stating that the building, or a specific space within a building, is deemed to be in compliance with the requirements of building codes, zoning codes, and other City Ordinances.

In the event that there is not total compliance but the building or space is deemed safe, a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) may be issued to a building or parts of building, for a provisional time period.

## **8. When is a Certificate of Occupancy/Temporary Certificate of Occupancy required?**

A Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) is required prior to occupancy of all new buildings, additions, new tenant spaces, and buildings which have changed occupancy type. Certificates of Occupancy start at \$50.00 and are issued by the Bureau of Buildings subsequent to approval by the Building inspector.

## **9. What posting (notices) are necessary in the permitting process?**

Posting a notice on site is required for tree removal prior to the issuance of a building permit. A posting serves as a notice that trees are to be removed; and also provides the public an option to appeal the proposed tree removal. A building permit cannot be issued until the property has been posted for at least fifteen (15) days without appeal. Once a building permit has been issued, a six (6) square foot sign must be posted for Notice of Permit Issuance. This sign must remain on the premises for at least thirty (30) days.

## **10. Why are plans required?**

Complete building and site plans are necessary to properly evaluate a project for compliance with construction, environmental, and zoning codes. Approved plans are the basis for which inspectors conduct their inspection and approval.

## **11. What are impact fees?**

Pursuant to the City of Atlanta Developmental Impact Fee Ordinance, the Bureau of Buildings is responsible for the calculation of all Developmental Impact fees. All new construction and occupancy changes to existing buildings are subject to Developmental Impact fee assessment.

## **12. What is a demolition permit and what are the requirements?**

A demolition [building] permit authorizes the complete removal of a building(s) from a property. Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit, the site must be inspected for rodents. A letter, required from a certified pest control company, must state that the property is free of rodents.

## **13. What type of fees are required to issue a permit?**

The following fees may be required:

- **Building permit fees** are currently (\$5.00 per \$1,000) of total construction value; the minimum is \$50.00
- **Development Impact fee** (*if applicable – see #11*)
- **Plumbing, Electrical, HVAC, and Elevator Fees** (*based on fixtures*)
- **Site Development fees** (*site specific*)- Department of Watershed Management

- **Tree Recompense Fees** where trees are removed.
- **Water Meter** (*Contact Department of Watershed Management, 404.330.6842*)
- **Sewer Tap** (*Contact Department of Watershed Management, 404.330.6842*)
- **Curb Cut** (*Contact Department of Public Works, 404.330.6501*)

**14. Is it true that a homeowner can perform electrical wiring and HVAC work?**

No.

**15. What does a building permit allow?**

A building permit is a license to build in accordance with a specific scope of work, including approved plans, if required. Any modification of permit scope or approved plans must be specifically approved.

**16. What is the area building inspector?**

The area building inspector is the individual assigned to evaluate the construction within a specified portion of the city.

**17. Can you use a private inspector?**

Yes, but only under specific and authorized conditions by the Director of the Bureau of Buildings.

**18. Is it true that a homeowner can install plumbing systems?**

Yes, as provided by law; however, a plumbing permit is required.

**19. What is a stream buffer?**

A stream buffer is a restricted area (parcel of land) within a specified distance from a stream or “waters of the state” where construction or land disturbance is not allowed.

**20. When can you cut down a tree?**

Permission must be given by the City of Atlanta Arborist. (*Arborist Division 404-330-6836*)

**21. What are some of the other functions of the Bureau of Buildings?**

The Bureau of Buildings investigates complaints of unsafe buildings; evaluates all applications for privileged business licensed premises; provides zoning and addressing information; investigates zoning violations; and performs inspections for evaluation of police licenses.

**22. What is a “Stop Work Order”?**

A Stop Work Order is a directive by the Bureau of Buildings to discontinue a particular construction activity.

**23. What happens if a person is found working without a building permit?**

Working without a permit is a misdemeanor violation of City Ordinance which can be punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine and/or thirty (30) days in jail, and a Stop Work Order may be issued. When such work is permitted a double fee up to \$1,000 may be assessed. Illegal work that is not in compliance with the law must be removed.